United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/813
24 January 1991

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ During informal consultations, coalition members report to Security Council on progress of military action in Persian Gulf.

+ UNDRO reports 80,000 people in Iraq moving towards Iranian border.

+ International Committee of Red Cross says it has fulfilled its mandate in accordance with 1949 Geneva Conventions during first week of hostilities in Gulf region.

+ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women begins tenth session in Vienna.

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The Security Council held informal consultations this afternoon on the Persian Gulf question. A United Nations official said that at the meeting, members of the coalition would report on their military activities, and the President intended to open the floor to others wishing to express their views.

The United Nations official said that, following the request by the Union of Arab Maghreb countries for an urgent meeting of the Council on the Gulf situation, the Council President had this morning received members of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), co-ordinated by Qatar, together with the representatives of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, who had informed him of their opposition to the request of the Maghreb countries. The Council was expected to discuss the position of the GCC countries during this afternoon's consultations.

The Council President was also expected to have bilateral consultations during the day and to meet with various other member countries who had asked to see him.

The request by the Union of Arab Maghreb countries for a Security Council meeting was supported today by the Sudan.

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For information media—not an official record

The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) reported today in its latest update on refugees and displaced persons in the Gulf that some 80,000 people in Iraq were currently moving towards the Iranian border. The Agency said the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UNDRO Resident Representative had held a meeting with the international donor community to brief them on a unified United Nations appeal for aid to the refugees.

* * *

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported today from Geneva that it had fulfilled its mandate under the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions "whenever it was required and able to do so" during the first week of hostilities in the Gulf region.

The Committee said advance preparedness posts had been set up near the borders in countries neighbouring Iraq and Kuwait (Jordan, Iran, Syria and Bahrain) and preparations for setting up field hospitals were well under way.

Since 19 January, the Red Cross had organized airlifts from Europe with medical material to those countries. The Committee said it would continue to mobilize the additional human and material resources required for the smooth running of a humanitarian operation of that magnitude.

* * *

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women began its tenth session in Vienna on Monday to review steps taken by 10 Governments to improve the status of women in the socio-economic and political fields.

During its current two-week session, scheduled to conclude on 1 February, the Committee will consider the initial reports of Italy and Burkina Faso, and the second periodic reports of Austria, Denmark, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Rwanda and Yugoslavia.

Opening the session, Chafika Sellami-Meslem, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, called for increased resources to carry out the Committee's work and stressed the importance of long-term planning to improve efficiency.

The newly elected Chairman, Mervat El- Tallawy, expert of Egypt, called for co-operation in achieving the Committee's goals -- equality and the advancement of women.

The Committee set up two open-ended working groups, one to suggest ways of expediting the work of the Committee and another to consider the Committee's general recommendations to the General Assembly.

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Composed of 23 experts, the Committee is the international body set up to monitor the progress made by States parties to implement the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The experts meet annually to review periodic country reports. As of 15 January, 103 States were party to the Convention.

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CORRECTION: In Tuesday's Highlights, Press Release DH/811 of 22 January, the penultimate paragraph on page 5 should be corrected to read as follows:

"In a related development, Carl-Magnus Hyltenius (Sweden), Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, a subsidiary body of the Conference on Disarmament, briefed the press today in Geneva on the status of the negotiations under way on the draft convention on chemical weapons. He said existing international instruments, notably the Geneva Protocol on chemical weapons, had definite weaknesses because they did not prohibit production of chemical weapons, and the draft convention was seeking to address that weakness."

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/814
25 January 1991

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council President says formal meeting of Council on Persian Gulf situation "is unlikely in immediate future".

+ International Committee of Red Cross visits Iraqi prisoners of war and civilian internees held by United States and United Kingdom.

+ Commission on Human Rights to begin forty-seventh session in Geneva on Monday, 28 January; to discuss human rights situation in Iraq and occupied Kuwait, among other things.

* * *

The President of the Security Council, Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya (Zaire), today continued bilateral consultations with individual Council members on the situation in the Persian Gulf. The Council was scheduled to meet in consultations later today to continue discussion of a request of the Arab Maghreb Union, supported by the Sudan, for a formal meeting on the Gulf conflict. The request was supported today by Yemen also.

Talking to correspondents last night, the Council President indicated that a formal meeting of the Council in the immediate future was unlikely. Hopes for an end to the conflict, he said, lay elsewhere. Council members believed that no further action should be taken until Iraq had withdrawn its occupation forces from Kuwait, the Council President stated.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has informed the United Nations that it has carried out its first visits to Iraqi prisoners-of-war held by the United States and the United Kingdom.

The Committee reported that it conducted a visit yesterday with seven captured Iraqi soldiers held by United States authorities in Saudi Arabia. It said the visit was conducted without witnesses in accordance with the Third Geneva Convention.

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United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/815
28 January 1991

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Foreign Minister of Iraq charges in letter to Secretary-General that countries behind Security Council resolutions on Gulf conflict, and Secretary-General himself, "bear responsibility" for "heinous crimes" being committed against his country.

+ Secretary-General asks UNEP Executive Director to report to him "as soon as possible" on oil slick in Persian Gulf which he considers "an ecological catastrophe of major proportions".

+ Security Council continues consultations on Persian Gulf crisis.

+ Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights says conflicts in the world today reinforces understanding that violations of human rights provides fertile soil for seeds of war.

* * *

Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz has accused States that endorse the Security Council resolutions on the Gulf conflict and Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar of personal responsibility for "the heinous crimes being committed against Iraq".

In a letter to the Secretary-General, the Iraqi Minister said his country was the victim of "United States, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and Zionist aggression" in the framework of a "conspiratory hostile to the hopes of peoples for freedom, sovereignty ... and relations of equality". The Governments involved, he said, had the sole objective of "vengeance" against the Iraqi people and its leadership because they had opposed the "imperialist goals of those Governments". It was shameful, he said, that those premeditated crimes were being committed "under the cover" of Security Council resolutions adopted under United States "pressure, blackmail and bribery".

The Iraqi Minister said attacks were taking place against civilian, economic, humanitarian, medical, cultural and religious targets, and on

(more)

For information media—not an official record

citizens and their families in all parts of Iraq. It was, he said, part of "the colonist technique" under the cover provided by resolutions fabricated in the name of United Nations.

In his letter to the Secretary-General, Mr. Aziz continued: "You, personally, bear responsibility to history and to mankind for the heinous crimes being committed against the free and militant people of Iraq."

Attached to the letter was a list of areas of Iraq which were said to have come under attack, indicating the extent of damage an casualties. One hundred ninety-eight civilians were said to have been killed and some 400 been wounded.

* * *

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said today through his Spokesman that he considered the oil slick in the Persian Gulf "an ecological catastrophe of major proportions". The Secretary-General has asked the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Mostafa K. Tolba, to report to him on the oil slick "as soon as possible".

In related news, UNEP expressed today its deep concern about the "actual and potentually dangerous environmental effects of the Gulf war". Executive Director Tolba appealed for international action, stating that the Programme was not only monitoring the situation, but was working fast to get an international independent and objective assessment of the current and potential damage.

In a similar announcement, the World Health Organization (WHO) has expressed concern about the impact of the oil slick on human health. The agency's Director-General, Hiroshi Nakajima, appealed today to all Governments concerned to pursue every effort to mitigate the effects on health of the oil spill in the Gulf and to stop its further spread. In a statement issued in Geneva, Mr. Nakajima described the discharge of oil into the Gulf as an environmental disaster of unprecedented proportions; the effects of which could be long-lasting and of concern to public health. The most imminent danger appeared to be the threat to a major source of water and to the countries of the region that depend on desalination of sea water for their daily water supply. The WHO is also expressing concern about the long-term impact on seafood, nutrition and on atmospheric pollution, not only in the immediate area but in the region as a whole.

* * *

The Security Council this afternoon continued its consultations on the situation in the Persian Gulf. The Council is currently discussing a request of the Arab Maghreb Union, supported by the Sudan and Yemen, for a formal meeting on the Gulf conflict. The request was supported today by Jordan.

Meanwhile, Japan today informed the United Nations that it had decided to support financially the multinational forces in the Gulf and the refugees in

(more)

the region with an additional contribution of $9 billion. In addition, Japanese civilian aircraft would transport refugees from Cairo to their home countries.

In another communication today, Canada informed the Organization that, as of 16 January, its armed forces in the Persian Gulf region were participating in military action with the armed forces of other Members of the United Nations, in accordance with Security Council resolutions.

France reported in a letter to the Council President that it had transmitted to the Iraqi Ambassador an official protest from the French Government regarding the Iraqi breach of the Geneva Conventions with respect to prisoners-of-war.

The French Government said it would apply the Geneva Conventions to all prisoners and would treat them humanely.

* * *

The Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, Jan Martenson, said in a opening statement this morning at the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights that the effective defence of human rights was an essential element to the preservation of peace.

Mr. Martenson said the armed conflict following the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, which had led to loss of life, widespread violations of human rights and devastating effects on the environment, was occurring despite strenuous international efforts to preserve peace and ensure respect for the Charter.

He stated further that the movement towards the establishment of fully democratic systems was encountering serious difficulties in several places, where force was replacing reason and dialogue. The conflicts in the world today reinforced the understanding that violations of human rights provided fertile soil for the seeds of war.

Also addressing the meeting, Enrique Bernales Ballesteros (Peru), the newly elected Chairman, noted that the Commission was meeting in the shadow of the war in the Gulf. Philosophically, he said, the preservation of human life was paramount, and from the human rights standpoint, war could never be justified. The cold war had been brought to an end not by force, but by the victory of peace and justice over war. All hoped that peace would be restored in the Gulf as soon as possible and that human rights and justice would prevail.

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United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/815/Corr.1
29 January 1991

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

CORRECTION

In Press Release DH/815 of 28 January, the first full paragraph on page 2 should read as follows: "In his letter to the Secretary-General, Mr. Aziz continued: 'You, personally, bear responsibility to history and to mankind for the heinous crimes being committed against the noble people of Iraq who are fighting for their freedom'".

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For information media—not an official record

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/816
29 January 1991

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General recommends that Security Council extend mandate of United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group for further period of one month, until 28 February.

+ Security Council concludes round of consultations on Persian Gulf crisis.

+ Human Rights Commission adds question of human rights situation in Kuwait to its agenda; hears statements by delegates of Iraq and Kuwait.

+ Secretary-General appoints Ji Chaozhu new Under-Secretary-General for Technical Co-operation for Development.

* * *

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar has reported to the Security Council that both Iran and Iraq have given firm indications to the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) that they remain determined to implement fully in due course the remaining tasks of the Force.

In his report to the Council of 28 January, the Secretary-General stated that he therefore recommended the extension of the UNIIMOG mandate for a further period of one month, until 28 February, so that the Group "may fulfil completely its important responsibilities".

Mr. Perez de Cuellar noted in the report that the fact that the parties had not proceeded according to schedule was "clearly not due to lack of commitment on either side", but was a consequence of the outbreak of hostilities in the area. He said Iran and Iraq had confirmed that they would continue to count on UNIIMOG's presence and assistance.

The Secretary-General further reported that, because of the current level of hostilities in the area, UNIIMOG had decided to temporarily relocate its Baghdad component outside Iraq.

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For information media—not an official record

The Security Council is expected to hold consultations tomorrow afternoon on the extension of the UNIIMOG mandate.

The Council will also hold consultations tomorrow afternoon on the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with a view to a formal meeting Thursday morning on an extension of UNIFIL's mandate.

* * *

The Security Council has ended its latest round of consultations on the Gulf conflict with no formal meeting of the Council in prospect. The request for a formal meeting, put forward last week by the Union of the Arab Maghreb and supported by the Sudan, Jordan and Yemen, was supported by Cuba today.

Talking to correspondents after yesterday's consultations, the Ambassador of the United States, Thomas R. Pickering, said Council members did not feel it was an appropriate time to have an open meeting of the Council, but that consultations on the subject would continue.

Also talking to correspondents, the Secretary-General was asked about his reaction to yesterday's letter from the Iraqi Foreign Minister accusing him and Member States behind the Security Council resolutions on the Gulf situation of responsibility for "heinous crimes" against Iraq. Mr. Perez de Cuellar replied that he preferred not to react to the letter at this moment. He added that he had to reflect on whether it was worthwhile to give an answer to the letter at all.

In another development, the Government of Iraq has maintained that the United States is to blame for the recent oil spills in the Persian Gulf causing environmental damage in the region.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, Iraq accused the United States of furthering the damage by bombing oil pipelines and intake and regulatory valves. The letter claimed that the United States bombings started a fire and caused more oil to spill into the waters of the Persian Gulf. Iraq said it was doing all it could to put out the fires, to stop the oil spills and to "mitigate the effects of the crime perpetrated by the United States".

Meanwhile, Kuwait has stated in a letter that, by polluting the environment and causing the disaster in the Gulf, the Iraqi regime has once again demonstrated its contempt for marine and human life. It said events clearly showed that the operation was undertaken by Iraq for purposes of sabotage.

In another communication, Iran has informed the United Nations that a number of Iraqi military aircraft have made emergency landings inside Iran. In a letter to the Secretary-General, the Iranian Ambassador reiterated Iran's "non-engagement in the present hostilities" and warned belligerent parties to refrain from any use of Iranian airspace. He said Iran had registered a strong protest to the Iraqi Government about the emergency landings, and had

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informed them that it would not allow the use of military vessels and personnel in Iran to any of the belligerent parties until hostilities were terminated.

A letter from Israel has called on all members of the international community to condemn Iraqi military attacks on that country's population. The Israeli Ambassador said that four people had died and 169 had been injured during the missile strikes. Israel reserved its right to call for a meeting of the Security Council as well as its right to act in self-defence, he said.

In a statement transmitted by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia, the Tunisian President, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, said the destruction and devastation of Iraq were "on the verge of becoming intolerable" and that he could not, in any way, accept the turn of events in the Gulf.

The Tunisian President stated that punishing the Iraqi people was a political mistake and an error of judgement. The Security Council resolutions concerned the liberation of Kuwait, not the destruction of Iraq. Consequently, the battlefield was not to extend beyond the boundaries of Kuwait, he said.

* * *

The United Nations Human Rights Commission, which began its current session yesterday in Geneva, today added the question of the human rights situation in occupied Kuwait to its agenda.

Speaking on the decision, the Iraqi delegate said he could support such a move if it meant the discussion of brutal raids by American and allied forces on civilian, cultural and religious targets in Kuwait. If, however, it was an attempt by the United States and its coalition to take advantage of the United Nations to blacken Iraq's name, he would oppose it.

The United States, he continued, used its veto in the Security Council on issues relating to Palestinians in the occupied territories; yet, thousands of tons of bombs were being used against the Iraqi people in the name of international law.

The representative of Kuwait said the Gulf crisis contributed to violation of Palestinian rights in the occupied territories. He said the media focused attention on people fleeing Kuwait instead of on the question of Palestinian rights. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), he added, had to provide financial assistance to Palestinians in Kuwait who were no longer in a position to help their families in the occupied territories. The Kuwaiti statement was interrupted three times by the Iraqi delegate, who said it deviated from the agenda item.

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* * *

The Secretary-General today announced the appointment of Ji Chaozhu of China as Under-Secretary-General for Technical Co-operation for Development. He will succeed Xie Qimei who has served the Organization since 1985.

China's Ambassador to the United Kingdom since 1987, Mr. Ji has also been his country's Ambassador to Fiji and, concurrently, to Kiribati and Vanuatu. He served as Minister Counsellor at China's Embassy in the United States from 1982 to 1985.

From 1975 to 1982, Mr. Ji was Deputy Director, Department of International Organizations and Conferences, and later, Deputy Director, Department of American and Oceanic Affairs, at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He was Counsellor of the Liaison Office of China to the United States from 1973 to 1975.

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United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/817
30 January 1991

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General rejects Iraqi Foreign Minister's charges that he and States behind Security Council resolutions are responsible for "crimes against Iraq"; says Saddam Hussein must respond positively to appeal for withdrawal from Kuwait if solution to "grave and tragic conflict" in Persian Gulf is to be found.

- Secretary-General recommends to Security Council extension of mandate of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for another six months, until 31 July, and of the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group for one more month, until 28 February.

- United Nations Environment Programme to send three experts to assess environmental damage in Persian Gulf caused by oil spill; calls for inter-agency/industry meeting.

- Hocine Djoudi of Algeria elected President of Economic and Social Council.

* * *

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, in response to the letter of 28 January from Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz of Iraq, today rejected his accusations that States behind the Security Council resolutions on the Gulf conflict and the Secretary-General himself bore personal responsibility for "the heinous crimes" committed against Iraq. In his letter, Foreign Minister Aziz had stated that Iraq was the victim of "United States, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Zionist aggression". The Governments involved, he said, had the sole objective of "vengeance" against the Iraqi people and its leadership because they had opposed the "imperialist goals of those Governments".

In his reply today, the Secretary-General told the Iraqi Foreign Minister that he had read his letter "with regret" and could not "but reject its connotations".

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Mr. Perez de Cuellar reiterated his 15 January appeal, which he had made again on 22 January, when he expressed his "profound grief and anxiety at the increasing severity of the war, the widening of the area of hostilities" and his fear that the toll in death and destruction would escalate unless his appeal received a positive response. He said he continued to believe that such a response was needed in order to find a peaceful solution to the "grave and tragic conflict" and to save human lives.

The Secretary-General recalled meetings he had had with Foreign Minister Aziz in Amman on 31 August, and with President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad on 13 January; and his appeal of 15 January to Saddam Hussein to show readiness to comply with Security Council resolutions, "so that the course of events could be turned away from catastrophe and towards a new era of justice and harmony, based on the principles of the United Nations Charter".

Mr. Perez de Cuellar also reminded the Iraqi Foreign Minister that he had stressed, at the Council meeting on 29 November 1990 when the 15 January deadline resolution for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait was adopted, that in requiring compliance with the Council resolutions, "the United Nations sought not surrender but the most honourable way of resolving a crisis in a manner that respected all legitimate interests and was conducive to the wider peace and the rule of law".

* * *

The Security Council held consultations this afternoon to discuss the Secretary-General's reports on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG).

The Council is scheduled to hold a formal meeting tomorrow morning to extend, on the Secretary-General's recommendations, the mandate of UNIFIL for another six months, until 31 July, and that of UNIIMOG for another month, until 28 February.

In his report to the Council on UNIFIL, the Secretary-General said that although the Force had still not been able to carry out the tasks entrusted to it, he believed it continued to make an important contribution to maintaining international peace and security in a volatile area.

He said the Government of Lebanon had asked in a letter that the mandate be extended for a further period, giving as a reason that important developments had taken place since UNIFIL's mandate was last renewed. The Lebanese Government had said it had gained control of the greater Beirut area and had deployed the army in certain regions in the southern part of the country.

In his report, the Secretary-General again referred to the serious financial situation of the peace-keeping Force in Lebanon, because Member countries had not paid nearly $300 million in assessed dues. The Secretary-General said he was especially concerned, since the Force needed to replace equipment that had become obsolete or unserviceable.

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The Secretary-General also submitted a 17-page report from a United Nations survey team on the scale and deployment of UNIFIL, in which measures for the streamlining of the Force were recommended, including proposals to save some 10 per cent in the Force's military strength.

The UNIFIL was established in 1978 after the invasion of Israeli forces into southern Lebanon following a Palestinian commando raid into Israel. The Security Council called on Israel to immediately cease its military action against Lebanon's territorial integrity, and established the Force to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces, restore international peace and security and help the Lebanese Government re-establish its effective authority in the area.

The Council also discussed this afternoon the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of UNIIMOG, which is stationed on the border between Iran and Iraq.

The Council is also expected to hold consultations on the Persian Gulf crisis at 4 p.m. tomorrow.

In a separate development, the Secretary-General today applauded the joint statement by the United States Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union that current military action by the allies in the Gulf region could be halted if President Saddam Hussein showed evidence of his intention to withdraw from Kuwait. The Secretary-General told correspondents that any move to end the hostilities and the death and destruction was to be welcomed.

* * *

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is sending three scientific experts to the Persian Gulf region this week to assess the environmental damage after the oil spill over the weekend. The agency is also taking steps to convene an inter-agency meeting in Geneva on 5 and 6 February to define the environment-related problems.

The task of the team will be to obtain independent and objective scientific and technical information on the physical and environmental damage, as well as on the socio-economic aspects of the war on the region. Another objective of the mission will be to ensure a continuous flow of information to those who may be in a position to act upon that information.

The mission, to be led by Michael Gwynne, Director of UNEP's Global Environment Monitoring System and Co-ordinator of UNEP's Earthwatch Programme, is expected to arrive in Saudi Arabia on Saturday, 2 February.

The UNEP Executive Director, Mostafa K. Tolba, has also called a two-day meeting of various United Nations agencies and representatives of major oil industries with interests in the region to define the numerous environment-related problems of the Gulf region, to address the gaps in the information flow and to develop a process to bridge those gaps.

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The agencies being invited to the meeting include the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

* * *

Hocine Djoudi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, was this afternoon elected President of the Economic and Social Council for 1991.

Mr. Djoudi, who was the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations from September 1984 to December 1990, has served as a Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council and Chairman of its First (Economic) Committee. He represented his country on the Security Council in 1988 and 1989, and was Council President in May 1988 and August 1989.

Mr. Djoudi has held a number of posts in the Algerian Foreign Ministry and has been Algeria's Ambassador to Spain, Portugal, Mozambique and Lesotho.

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United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/818
31 January 1991

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council unanimously renews mandate of United Nations peace-keeping force in the area -- UNIFIL -- for another six months, until 31 July.

- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees plans food distribution to West Bank and Gaza to alleviate hardships caused by Israeli-imposed curfews.

- Special Committee against Apartheid re-elects Ibrahim A. Gambari (Nigeria) Chairman for 1991 at first meeting of the year.

* * *

The Security Council last night decided unanimously to renew the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for another six months, until the end of July.

By its decision, the Council called on all parties concerned to co-operate fully with the Force in confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon and assisting the Lebanese Government in re-establishing its effective authority over that area.

In addition, the President of the Council made a statement on behalf of Council members, expressing full support for the Taif Agreement and for "the recent efforts of the Lebanese Government to extend its authority over all Lebanese territory". He commended the troops and troop-contributing countries of UNIFIL for their sacrifices and commitment, under difficult circumstances, to the cause of international peace and security.

In another development, the Security Council this afternoon held consultations on the Persian Gulf conflict. The Council still has before it a request for a meeting submitted by the Arab Maghreb Union, supported by the Sudan, Jordan, Cuba and Yemen. Among them, two countries -- Cuba and Yemen -- are members of the Council. As this afternoon's consultations began, the

(more)

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Ambassador of Cuba stated he would decline to take part in any further consultations -- unless they were specifically in preparation for an open Council meeting.

In other news, the Secretary-General today met with the Foreign Minister of Egypt, Esmat Abdel Meguid, who was conveying to Mr. Perez de Cuellar the views of his Government on the Gulf crisis.

Talking to correspondents after the meeting, the Egyptian Foreign Minister said he had brought no new peace initiative from his Government. He expressed appreciation for the role played by the Secretary-General and the United Nations in trying to reach a peaceful solution. Egypt condemned the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait and supported the implementation of the Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 678 (1990) which set the 15 January deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, he said.

* * *

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has begun a programme of emergency food distribution to alleviate shortages and hardships experienced by Palestinian refugees and non-refugees alike.

UNRWA's action is in response to food shortages caused by strictly enforced curfews imposed by the Israeli authorities on the Palestinian population of the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank, since hostilities began in the Gulf.

The Agency reported that no one was permitted to leave home except during selective liftings of the curfews when women were allowed out to purchase foodstuffs from makeshift or mobile markets. The entire working population of the occupied territory -- estimated at more than 280,000 people -- has been deprived of the opportunity to earn an income during this two-week period. The UNRWA has received reports that both food stocks and cash supplies are running low in most homes.

The Agency has appealed to a number of its traditional major donors for special contributions. A partial distribution in Gaza and the West Bank has already been initiated by the Agency, and further distributions will be carried out as commodities become available.

In a statement issued today, UNRWA's Commissioner-General, Giorgio Giacomelli, called on the Israeli authorities to lift curfews in the occupied territory as a humanitarian measure. He said that as an international humanitarian organization, the Agency felt those curfews were an "unnecessary burden on Palestinians who are already suffering greatly from the effects of the Gulf war in terms of lost jobs and income from the Gulf States".

* * *

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The Special Committee against Apartheid, at its first meeting of the year, this morning elected its officers and heard statements urging the continuation of sanctions against South Africa and welcoming the meeting two days ago between Nelson Mandela, Deputy President of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), and Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party.

The Special Committee re-elected Ibrahim A. Gambari (Nigeria) as its Chairman for 1991. The Chairman said the Committee's central task was to promote the peaceful process of negotiations in South Africa, and that the international community had the duty to maintain pressure on South Africa until a new constitution establishing a non-racial democracy in that country was adopted.

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United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/819
1 February 1991

F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- Security Council unanimously extends mandate of Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group for one month, until 28 February. Meeting on Persian Gulf conflict to be scheduled.

- Secretary-General is informed by United States Ambassador that Washington-based press criticisms of efforts by his Personal Representative on El Salvador talks do not reflect United States position.

- International Maritime Organization (IMO) to help clean up oil spill in Persian Gulf pollution emergency.

- Human Rights Commission hears statements by EEC Council President and representatives on human rights in occupied Arab territories, including Palestine, and right of peoples to self-determination.

- Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women concludes session in Vienna; recommends that women working in family enterprises be paid.

* * *

The Security Council has extended the mandate of the United Nations Military Observer Group on the Iran-Iraq border -- known as UNIIMOG -- for one more month, until the end of February.

The Council acted unanimously last night in adopting resolution 685 (1991), by which it also requested the Secretary-General to report back this month on his further consultations with Iran and Iraq concerning the Group's future.

The Secretary-General had earlier reported to the Council that both Iran and Iraq have given firm indications to the Group that they remained determined to implement fully, in due course, the agreed arrangements.

The Secretary-General noted that the fact that the parties had not proceeded according to schedule was "clearly not due to lack of commitment on

(more)

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either side", but was a consequence of the outbreak of hostilities in the area. He said Iran and Iraq had confirmed that they would continue to count on the presence and assistance of UNIIMOG, which was set up in 1987 to verify, confirm and supervise the cease-fire and the withdrawal of all forces to the internationally recognized borders. Because of the current crisis in the region, the United Nations observers are operating only from the Iranian side of the border.

During last night's Council meeting, the representatives of Cuba and Yemen expressed regret that the Council had not yet been able to meet to consider the current wider war situation in the region.

Both Council members have requested an immediate open meeting, along with Jordan, the Sudan and the five North African countries of the Union of Arab Maghreb.

The Ambassador of Cuba, Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada, said the Council had an elementary obligation to fulfil in connection with the situation in the Gulf -- which was a serious problem to the entire world.

The Ambassador of Yemen, Abdalla Saleh Al-Ashtal, said the crisis in the Gulf might lead to a paralysis of the Council. The Council must always stand against war. What was happening in the region was going beyond what the Council had authorized. He said there was an attempt to destroy the military and scientific infrastructure of Iraq rather than to liberate Kuwait.

The Security Council President, Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya of Zaire, said the Council had agreed to hold an open meeting to discuss the present situation in the Persian Gulf region, but had not yet decided on a date. He said the Council President for the month of February, Simbarashe Simbanenduku Mumbengegwi (Zimbabwe), would continue consultations to try to prepare for the meeting.

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A United Nations official said today that the Secretary-General was disturbed by a press dispatch from Washington reporting criticisms of the efforts in the El Salvador talks by his Personal Representative, Alvaro de Soto.

The official said United States Ambassador, Thomas R. Pickering, had telephoned the Secretary-General this morning and assured him that the anonymous sources did not reflect the United States position regarding ongoing efforts under the Secretary-General's auspices, which the United States supports.

While obviously the United Nations plays an important role in this effort, the responsibility for progress in the negotiations belongs to the parties, who set the pace and must agree on the substance, the official said. He added that Mr. de Soto performs his role in constant consultation with them.

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In another development, the Secretary-General was asked this morning by correspondents about his reaction to a statement made earlier today by South African President De Klerk which emphasized the Government's determination to fulfil its promises of reforms towards the abolition of apartheid.

The Secretary-General in reply said he hoped the developments were fully confirmed and that it meant that the beginning of the end of apartheid was near. Mr. Perez de Cuellar said he considered the statement "a very constructive step towards the eradication of the system of apartheid".

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The International Maritime Organization (IMO), the London-based agency of the United Nations responsible for maritime safety and the prevention of pollution from ships, is to help the Saudi Arabian authorities to clean up the oil spill now threatening large areas of the Persian Gulf.

Among measures developed by IMO to combat pollution is the International Convention on Oil Preparedness, Response and Co-operation, which is designed to facilitate international co-operation in the event of a major pollution threat.

In that context, a number of IMO member States have made offers of assistance to the agency. The Secretary-General of IMO, William A. O'Neil, has established an operations centre within the organization to handle this task, and contacts have been established with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States as well as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

In a statement today, Mr. O'Neil said, that during the last 10 years, the measures that have been adopted by IMO and its 134 member States have led to a remarkable reduction in the amount of oil pollution generated by shipping activities. Nevertheless, the new Convention was an attempt to do more in improving the international system for responding to major marine pollution disasters. Mr. O'Neil added that none of the 90 countries participating in the Conference had realized just how quickly co-operation of this type would be needed and that it would be required in this context.

* * *

The Human Rights Commission, today ending the first week of its forty-seventh session in Geneva, has taken up the question of violations of human rights in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine. The Commission is also discussing the right of peoples to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation.

Addressing the Commission yesterday, Jacques Poos, Deputy Prime Minister of Luxembourg and current President of the Council of the European Communities, reiterated the European Community's condemnation of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and of recent acts of repression in the Baltics.

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Referring to the Baltics, Mr. Poos called attention to the tragic events about two weeks ago in the city of Vilnius and a week later in Riga. He said the Community and its member States had condemned those acts of repression, which were in flagrant violation of the Charter of Paris, formally adopted in November last year at the Summit of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE).

He went on to say that current events were a sad reminder that in the end, any continuous and systematic violation of fundamental rights inevitably led to conflicts which rapidly spread beyond the limited context in which they arose. It was therefore essential for the international community to seek to guarantee international peace through its activities in support of respect for human rights.

Among other statements yesterday, the representative of Tunisia, Souad Lyagoubi-Ouahch, said the repression of the Palestinian people continued in the occupied territories. The United Nations had for the past 23 years adopted resolutions confirming the rights of the Palestinian people, but they had had no effect on the Israeli authorities. The intifadah was a legitimate response to the repression, and international efforts were needed to secure a lasting solution to the Palestinian problem.

In another statement yesterday, Fawaz Shana, of Jordan, said the Commission had succeeded in drawing the world's attention to the crucial problem of the Palestinians for many years. Yet Israel was still continuing its aggressive stance towards Palestinians and its disregard for the international community's unambiguous criticism of its actions. He called for Israel's adherence to United Nations resolutions.

As the Commission continued the debate on the Palestinian question today, the representative of Israel, Ralph Walden, said that while his country had not made the Fourth Geneva Convention part of its law, it applied the treaty in practice.

Referring to the curfew imposed since the outbreak of the Gulf war, Mr. Walden said that it was not true, as had been alleged, that the reason why the curfew was so strict was to prevent the Palestinian Arabs from acquiring their basic needs, including food. Israel was ensuring distribution of food and medical supplies. The real reason why the curfew was strict was that in the present situation, Israel had to take stringent measures to protect the safety of its citizens. It had to respond to acts of violence, with its soldiers using force only as a last resort.

The Israeli representative went on to say that the right to Palestinian self-determination was recognized in the Camp David Accords. Last year's plan put forward by Israeli Prime Minister Shamir made provision for the implementation of the Accords through negotiation with elected representatives of the Palestinians. If anything was responsible for postponement of negotiation, it was pressure exerted on Israel to negotiate not with elected representatives of the Palestinians, but with their self-appointed representatives, namely the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), he said.

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Affirming that women who worked in family enterprises without payment were being exploited, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women this morning called for such women workers to be guaranteed payment, social security and social benefits.

Concluding its tenth session, which began on 21 January in Vienna, the Committee also called for an evaluation of the domestic work of women and recommended that that value be added to the gross national product of the country.

In another general recommendation, the Committee called on countries to provide information on disabled women and on measures taken to ensure that they had equal access to education, employment, health services, and social security. There are currently 103 States parties to the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The 23-member expert Committee is the international mechanism for monitoring progress in the implementation of the Convention. States parties are required to submit an initial report within one year of accession to the Convention, and periodic reports at least every four years.

In the course of its two-week session, the Committee studied the initial reports of Burkina Faso and Italy and the second periodic reports of Austria, Denmark, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Rwanda and Yugoslavia. The Committee questioned the representatives of those countries on the legal and social measures undertaken by them to give effect to the provisions of the Convention.

The Committee decided that, at its 1992 session, it would consider the initial reports of Honduras, Romania and Yemen, and the second periodic reports of El Salvador, Sri Lanka, Spain, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

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United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/820
4 February 1991

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General expresses hope that initiatives announced by South African President at opening of Parliament will advance further removal of main pillars of apartheid.

- Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) reports several hundred people killed by earthquake which struck Afghanistan and Pakistan Friday morning.

- Secretary-General expresses deep concern about attack on health centre in Angola.

* * *

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said today through his Spokesman that the address of President De Klerk at the opening of the South African Parliament on Friday advanced further the process of removing statutory apartheid from the country's institutional framework.

He expressed hope that the "constructive initiatives" would be accompanied by measures giving substantive effect to the removal of the main pillars of apartheid and by the resolution of a number of outstanding issues required for the commencement of negotiations. Mr. Perez de Cuellar said he was heartened to see that those and other initiatives of South African leaders were providing an impetus to the process of eradicating apartheid and the establishment of a non-racial and democratic society in the country as envisaged by the United Nations.

* * *

Several hundred people have been killed by an earthquake which struck Afghanistan and Pakistan on the morning of 1 February, according to a report released today by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) in Geneva.

The Agency reported that, with respect to Afghanistan, the earthquake had affected 18 provinces, but that damage assessment was made difficult by the

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affected area's remoteness. Government authorities, UNDRO said, feared that hundreds were killed, in addition to heavy damage inflicted to buildings and livestock. The severe winter weather created a major problem of accommodations for the victims, and the Afghan Government had requested UNDRO to launch an appeal for international assistance, the Agency said.

With respect to Pakistan, UNDRO said the UNDRO/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) resident representative had reported 181 killed, 502 injured and extensive damage to buildings and livestock. It said emergency relief was made difficult by heavy snowfall. The Pakistani Government was preparing a request for emergency assistance and would report on the situation as it received information from its search and rescue teams.

* * *

A United Nations official told correspondents today that the Secretary-General had been deeply concerned to learn of an attack on a health centre operated by Médecins Sans Frontières (Belgium and Spain) near Kuito, Bie Province, in Angola, in which one person was killed and several were injured.

The official said the Secretary-General appealed to all parties involved to use their good offices to guarantee the security of personnel involved in providing the humanitarian assistance that was essential for the survival of large numbers of the affected population in Angola.

Médecins Sans Frontières is one of the non-governmental organizations which has signed a letter of association with the United Nations as part of the Special Relief Programme for Angola.

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In another development, the United Nations official told correspondents that the Secretary-General was asked by correspondents this morning, upon entering the building, to comment on the proposal made by Iranian President Rafsanjani to mediate in the Persian Gulf conflict.

The Secretary-General said in reply that he "welcomed such an initiative" and that he, as Secretary-General, was "enormously concerned" about the loss of life and the material damages. He went on to say that he thought Iran was in a good position to produce a formula which could put an end to the present situation. "Something has to be done in order to stop the war", he stated.

Asked about the possibility of sending United Nations staff into Iraq on a humanitarian mission, Mr. Perez de Cuellar replied that he was scheduled to have a meeting with Executive Director Grant of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) this afternoon. Mr. Grant was currently in Geneva, the Secretary-General said, to see how the United Nations system could relieve the present situation on all sides -- mainly with medicine and food for children.

The official said the Secretary-General planned to hold another meeting with Mr. Grant next week, with heads of Agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO).

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United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/821
5 February 1991

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Chairman of Special Committee against Apartheid welcomes announced initiatives by South African President in Parliament; calls them "a step forward" in process of fundamental change in the country.

- United Nations humanitarian agencies warn that thousands of refugees in the Sudan, Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia, Mozambique and Malawi will die due to drought, civil war and concentration of funding for Gulf conflict; UNICEF to appeal on Friday for $130 million from international community to avert crisis.

- Human Rights Commission hears address by Swedish Foreign Minister on question of human rights violations in occupied Arab territories.

- Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for framework convention on climate change opens at Westfields Conference Center, Washington, D.C.

- UNICEF Executive Director reports on "momentous" developments for children as Executive Board opens organizational session.

* * *

The Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid, Ibrahim Gambari (Nigeria), said today in a statement to the press that he welcomed South African President de Klerk's announcement in Parliament last Friday on apartheid. He said it "undoubtedly" represented "a step forward" in the continuing process of bringing about fundamental change in South Africa. The repeal of the Land and Group Areas Acts, and the promise to introduce interim changes to the Population Registration Act, would remove pillars of apartheid, he said.

Mr. Gambari expressed hope that the initiatives were accompanied by substantive policies, regarding access to land by the black majority as well as by programmes of affirmative action, which, he said, were necessary to redress the grave socio-economic inequities generated by those Acts in education, housing, health and employment.

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The Committee Chairman further acknowledged the acceptance of the South African authorities to hold a multi-party conference and to consider transitional arrangements at all levels of Government. He said such a conference could be an auspicious step if it led to an agreement by all parties concerned on the mechanisms for the drawing up of a new constitution as envisaged in the United Nations Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa.

However, Mr. Gambari said, the South African President's silence on a number of issues that were crucial to the creation of an appropriate atmosphere for negotiations remained a source of serious concern. The speech, he said, made no reference to the promised review of the Internal Security Act and the implementation of other agreements made with the African National Congress (ANC), in particular concerning the release of political prisoners and the return of political exiles without restrictions.

Finally, Mr. Gambari said, the right of all South Africans to vote and be voted for was still to be realized under the new dispensation of President de Klerk, as had been pointed out by the leaders of the black majority.

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While international attention is focused on the Persian Gulf region and on the exodus of refugees from Iraq and Kuwait, the situation of refugees in Africa remains a major concern for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In a press release issued at Headquarters, UNHCR said continued conflicts and instability in a number of African countries had created new refugee movements. In addition, sustained increases in fuel prices as a result of events in the Gulf had had a major negative impact on the budgeting of UNHCR assistance programmes throughout the continent.

Outlining the current situation of refugees in a number of African countries, UNHCR said that with regard to refugees in Ethiopia, the Sudanese refugee population in the country currently stood at around 385,000. A possible new influx of 50,000 Sudanese refugees was expected because of continuing conflict, drought and famine and UNHCR had prepared a contingency plan. In addition, the agency said, more that 375,000 Somali refugees were currently to be found in Ethiopia together with more than 12,000 new Ethiopian returnees from Somalia.

With respect to the Sudan, UNHCR reported that economic and environmental problems, coupled with continued conflict between government and rebel forces, had produced extensive crop failures. Food prices had reached levels which were beyond the purchasing power of many of the estimated 700,000 Ethiopian refugees living in the Sudan.

In November last year, UNHCR went on, the Mozambican refugee population in Malawi stood at nearly 910,000. A new influx of Mozambicans in late 1990 led to overcrowding in a number of camps, thus increasing the potential for

outbreaks of disease. The agency was reassessing its programme in Malawi in order to respond to those problems. Current peace talks between the Mozambican Government and the Mozambique National Resistence Movement (RENAMO) could improve the prospect for the organized return of the refugee population in Malawi and other neighbouring countries.

With regard to Liberian refugees, UNHCR said that since the beginning of the civil war, which started on the last day of 1989, more than 700,000 Liberians -- 32 per cent of the population -- had sought asylum in the neighbouring countries of Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. The conclusion of a cease-fire agreement in Bamako at the end of November, coupled with the United Nations distribution of foodstuffs within the country, had led to a reduction in the pace of the exodus, the agency said.

In a related development, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned today that thousands of people will die in Africa unless the international community helps to avert a crisis as potentially tragic as that of 1985.

The Director of UNICEF's Emergency Programme, Charles La Muniere, told a news conference in Geneva today that the situation was particularly critical in the Sudan, Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia, Mozambique and Malawi. The agency would appeal on Friday for $130 million, Mr. La Muniere said, to meet the non-food needs of women and children in those countries this year.

The critical situation was due to a combination of drought, civil war, increased oil prices, lower commodity prices and the concentration of funding for the Gulf, Mr. La Muniere said, adding that some 100,000 people's lives were at risk.

* * *

The Commission on Human Rights, currently discussing the question of human rights violations in the occupied territories, among other things, heard yesterday a statement by Foreign Minister Sten Andersson of Sweden.

Commenting on the human rights situation in the Middle East, Mr. Andersson said the Commission had listened for many years to reports of serious human rights violations in Iraq.

Iraq had broken the peace with its brutal invasion of Kuwait and reports emanating from there told of "inconceivable atrocities", the Swedish Foreign Minister said. The missile attacks on civilians in non-participating countries, deliberate oil spills and the threat of bio-chemical and chemical weapons were further examples of Iraq's disrespect for international humanitarian law, he said.

Mr. Andersson went on to say that Sweden condemned infringements in the Baltic republics on basic human rights by a Government which claimed to adhere to international laws and instruments, the most recent of which was the Paris Charter signed last year.

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The Human Rights Commission is currently in the second week of its forty-seventh session in Geneva, which ends on 8 March.

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The urgency of addressing the issue of global warming was stressed yesterday as the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a framework convention on climate change opened at the Westfields International Conference Center, outside Washington, D.C. The negotiations are expected to produce an international agreement on ways to reduce global climate warming.

Opening the meeting on behalf of Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, Antoine Blanca, Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, said interdependence had acquired a new dimension, that of climate change. Harmony among nations and between nations and this planet, he said, was a necessary condition for the successful elaboration of a framework convention.

Representing the host country -- the United States -- Michael R. Deland, Chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality, said it was the height of irony that as this dialogue on a shared environmental future was beginning, Saddam Hussein's premeditated release of crude oil into the Persian Gulf was inflicting enormous environmental damage.

As to the negotiations, he said the agreements reached should be long-term and adaptable. There was need for an international climate convention that committed all nations to meaningful action, yet did not limit States to some fixed formula.

Also addressing the opening meeting, Mostafa K. Tolba, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), said the mounting evidence of global warming and climate change gave urgency to the Committee's negotiations. What was needed was a convention which stipulated what must be done, by whom, when, how and at what cost.

G.O.P. Obasi, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), said the negotiations on a framework convention on climate change would also be about fundamental global changes in energy policy and practices, the use of the world's forests, low-cost transfer of energy-efficient technologies to developing countries and funding development pathways with low greenhouse gas emissions.

* * *

James P. Grant, UNICEF Executive Director, told the Fund's Executive Board this morning that the past year had been "probably the most momentous year for children in history". Mr. Grant addressed the Board as it opened an organizational session in preparation for its regular session scheduled for 27 April - 3 May.

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The Executive Director outlined steps being taken by UNICEF to address crisis situations in the Sudan, Ethiopia and Angola and reviewed such challenges as the spread of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and the effects of the Gulf crisis. In particular, he said that both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Summit for Children Declaration called for the protection of children caught in conflict situations, and discussions were currently under way on how to honour those provisions.

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United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/822
6 February 1991

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

◆ Secretary-General tells Palestinian Rights Committee preoccupation with Persian Gulf crisis should not turn world attention away from Palestine question; will name special representative for Middle East.

◆ Iraqi Foreign Minister says he finds it "strange" that Secretary-General has not expressed his view with regard to letter of 28 January, stating that "forces of the United States, NATO and Zionist alliance have been committing heinous and premeditated crimes against Iraq".

◆ World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund to send joint mission to Iraq to deliver shipment of emergency medical supplies for children and mothers.

◆ Speakers at Human Rights Commission session in Geneva praises South African President's announced intention to repeal Land Act, Group Areas Act and Development of Black Communities Act.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar told the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People this morning that, although the world was preoccupied with the Persian Gulf crisis, it should not turn its attention from the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which touched, directly or indirectly, millions of persons and dozens of countries.

The Secretary-General disclosed that he had decided to name a special representative for the Middle East during the coming weeks in order to assist an active negotiating process to promote peace in that region of the world. Before making his choice, he would consult with the interested parties as well as with the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar stated that the protection of the Palestinian civilians under the occupation remained a grave preoccupation of the international community, and he would do everything in his power with the

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means available to carry out the tasks given to him. He continued to believe, however, that the application of those measures would not suffice to put an end to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians which had an essentially political character and called for a negotiated solution.

It was encouraging to note, he said, that in a statement made through their President on 20 December, the members of the Security Council had reaffirmed their support for a negotiating process in which all concerned parties would participate, and which would lead to a just and durable solution to the conflict. The Council members agreed that an international conference, at an appropriate time, properly structured, should facilitate a settlement, but there was no unanimity as to when would be the appropriate time.

Beginning its work for the year this morning, the Committee re-elected Absa Claude Diallo (Senegal) as its Chairman for 1991. The Committee decided to re-establish its working group to formalize ideas on what it should be doing in light of the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

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Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, in a letter to Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar dated 2 February, said he found it strange that Mr. Perez de Cuellar had not expressed his view with regard to his letter of 28 January. In that letter, the Iraqi Minister stated, among other things, that "the forces of the United States, NATO and Zionist alliance have been committing heinous and premeditated crimes against Iraqi citizens and against the economic, cultural, scientific and religious institutions of the Iraqi people".

Mr. Aziz further held the Secretary-General himself and the countries behind the Security Council resolutions on the Gulf conflict personally responsible for such "crimes committed against Iraq".

In the new letter made available today, Mr. Aziz said the Secretary-General, instead of expressing his view, had remained silent concerning the crimes which, he said, for the first time in history were being committed in the name of the United Nations. The crimes, he continued, were being committed under the "cloak of groundless and unjust Security Council resolutions", the most recent of which was resolution 678 -- the resolution setting the 15 January deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

The Iraqi Minister said in the letter that the very goals the United Nations was supposed to embody were being violated before the eyes and with the knowledge of the Secretary-General, who had uttered "not a word".

Attached to the letter today is a new list of areas of Iraq which were said to have come under attack, indicating the extent of damage and casualties. That brought to 288 the total number of killed, according to the Iraqi authorities, and the total number of wounded to some 630.

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The Secretary-General, in response to the Iraqi Minister's first letter, had earlier rejected the charge that he and countries behind the Security Council resolutions were to blame for the current conflict in the Gulf. Mr. Perez de Cuellar reminded Mr. Aziz that he had appealed repeatedly on 15 January and again a week later to President Saddam Hussein to respond in order to find a peaceful solution to the "grave and tragic conflict" and to save human lives.

In another development, the Security Council held informal consultations this afternoon to discuss the question of the Persian Gulf conflict.

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A United Nations official announced today that a joint UNICEF/World Health Organization (WHO) mission is to be sent to Iraq to deliver a shipment of emergency medical supplies to assist in the care of children and mothers and ascertain essential health needs. The dispatch of such medical supplies, the official said, would be within the spirit of the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Declaration of the World Summit for Children. He said it was hoped the mission could arrive in Baghdad by the end of next week.

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar and UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant met two days ago to discuss how the Organization could help meet urgent humanitarian needs arising from the conflict in the region of the Persian Gulf. Mr. Grant briefed the Secretary-General on his recent visit to Geneva where he met with the heads of various international humanitarian relief organizations including the WHO Director-General. Currently, the United Nations official said, there are relief operations in four countries of the region and major contingency preparations have been made as part of the Regional Humanitarian Plan of Action, led by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO).

* * *

The Human Rights Commission, currently debating the human rights situation in southern Africa, today heard a number of speakers praise South African President de Klerk's announced intention to repeal the Land Act, the Group Areas Act and the Development of Black Communities Act which divide the country by law geographically to separate whites and blacks. At the same time, today's speakers also called for further measures not to reform apartheid but to eliminate it.

Among the speakers, Ambassador Emeka Azikiwe of Nigeria said his delegation welcomed President de Klerk's announcement. Nigeria felt, however, that South Africa had not yet been put on the path of irreversible change. He called for a democratically elected assembly to regulate the transition to a free, united and democratic South Africa.

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Also addressing the Commission, the Ambassador of Canada, Raynell Andreychek, said the impact of measures to replace well-known pillars of apartheid with a non-racial land policy should not be underestimated. She was surprised, however, that President de Klerk had overlooked in his statement the urgent need for action on political prisoners, exiles and security legislation. Fewer than a quarter of all political prisoners had been released nearly a full year after Nelson Mandela was freed, she said.

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